AKIRA

34 ™

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AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

Chapter 34

PHANTOM VOICES

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

2030. The world hovers on the brink of World War IV. **Kaneda**, onetime leader of a delinquent gang, is caught up in the aftermath of a power struggle between a Japanese military research organization —led by a man known only as the **Colonel**—and a resistance group whose members included **Kay**, **Ryu**, and a formidable woman named **Chiyoko.**

The **Colonel** had a number of psychic children under his control. Each was identified by a number tattooed on the hand. Among them were **Kiyoko** and **Masaru**—Numbers 25 and 27. The blind **Lady Miyako**—Number 19—was once among their ranks but now heads a great religious cult. Number 41 is **Tetsuo**, once Kaneda's friend but now his greatest enemy. **Tetsuo** lost his left arm to a laser blast from the Colonel's military satellite SOL, and has used cybernetics and telekinesis to fabricate for himself a prosthetic replacement.

Most powerful of all the children is Number 28—**Akira**—a docile and enigmatic boy who was placed in cryogenic sleep almost 40 years ago, after his mental blast started the Third World War. **Akira** was recently reawakened by **Tetsuo**, and again he devastated the reconstructed city of **Neo-Tokyo**. Japan now exists in a state of emergency. The forces of the army and the resistance are scattered, and the military's formidable "caretaker robots" patrol the streets.

In the western part of **Neo-Tokyo**, the **Great Tokyo Empire** is formed—a monarchy with **Akira** on the throne and **Tetsuo** as his prime minister. Together the pair use their powers, healing the sick, wielding control of the faithful, and organizing their subjects into fighting units to defend their land. Their headquarters is Neo-Tokyo's Olympic Stadium. To the East, **Lady Miyako** welcomes refugees to her shrine. In this, she is

Kaneda

The Colonel

Lady Miyako

Joker

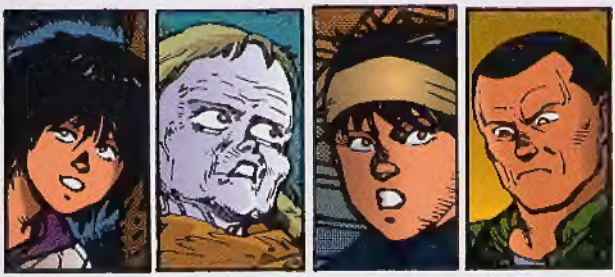
aided by **Kiyoko**, **Masaru**, and a number of loyal, psychic monks.

The **Empire** is infiltrated by teams of spies of commando units from the outside world, equipped with biochemical armaments which take a tremendous toll on Tetsuo's forces. A fleet of foreign ships waits in Tokyo Bay, poised for action. Aboard an American naval vessel, an international conclave of scientists and one Tibetan monk study the **Akira** phenomenon—which they've codenamed **Juvenile A**. One of the scientists—**Stanley Simmons**—goes ashore without military authorization, hoping desperately to implement a secret plan.

Meanwhile **Lady Miyako**, **Masaru** and **Kiyoko** convince **Kay** to join them in battle against **Tetsuo**, because **Kay** is a powerful medium, through whom the others can project their powers and strike as one.

Kaneda, who's teamed up with **Kai** and **Joker**—a friend and a rival from his gang days—vows to kill **Tetsuo** himself rather than let **Kay** face such danger. He, **Kai** and **Joker** launch an assault against Tetsuo, using most of their men, as well as such state-of-the-art weapons as they've salvaged, including laser rifles, flying platforms, and one caretaker robot. At the Olympic Stadium, they find destruction and chaos. Their enemy is already under attack by **Kay**, the outside forces, and even disloyal subjects of his own empire.

In battle, **Tetsuo** loses control, and his artificial arm assumes a grossly mutated form. He runs amok, killing anyone who comes too close. His power has grown beyond what his body can contain and is now trying to absorb its



Kaori Kiyoko Kay Lt. Yamada

surroundings. His body begins to alternate between a normal human form and an immense, uncontrollable, bloated grotesquerie.

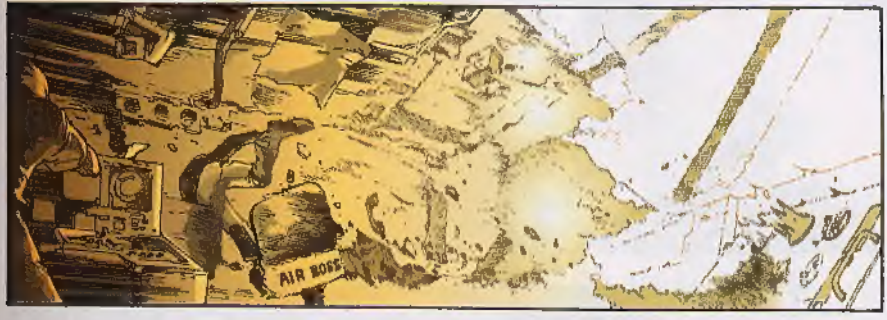
Kaori, the girl **Tetsuo** loves, is murdered by traitors. While **Tetsuo** is mourning her, he and his followers are attacked by the armed infiltrators. **Tetsuo**'s supporters die horribly, while **Akira** looks placidly on. **Tetsuo**, shot by the biochem weapons, is enraged, and his enemies, too, die a hideous death.

Ironically, the germs in the weapons affect **Tetsuo** like a drug, enabling him to reassert mastery over his powers. A duel in the stadium ensues, with **Kay** and **Kaneda** using lasers and telekinesis against him. The fight goes on and on, with the advantage shifting time and again. **Kaneda** sends **Kai** to safety with **Akira**, and **Kai** hands the boy over to another gang member, hoping to find **Joker** and return to the fray.

Then, the international fleet in the harbor sends fighter planes to rain death upon **Neo-Tokyo** causing chaos among all the combatants. **Akira** slips away from his guardians and rejoins **Kaneda** in the stadium, saying that he's been called by a power from above. The power is an orbiting laser cannon which the admiral of the fleet has ordered fired at the stadium. The laser pauses to recharge just before firing at **Tetsuo**, and **Tetsuo** transports himself to space, seizing control of the weapon.

Before the ships can be evacuated, **Tetsuo** fires the cannon at the fleet. For a finale, he brings the entire satellite crashing down upon the bridge of the flagship where the admiral commands.

Chiyoko Tetsuo Masaru Akira


AIR BOSS

GLUK
GLUK
GLUK

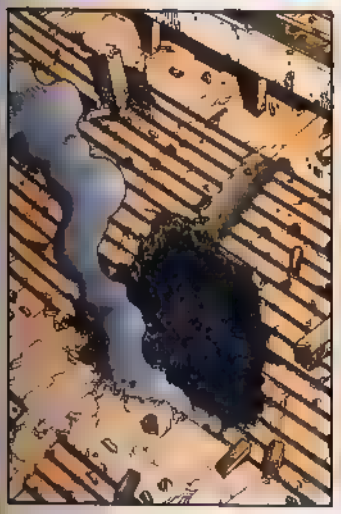
WHOOSH
WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

BEEP
BEEEP
BEEEP

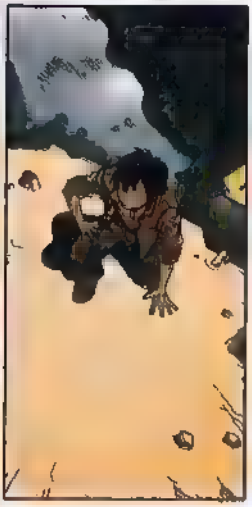
KA-SHWSHH
WE'VE SPRUNG A LEAK!
THERE'S MORE WATER COMING IN HERE!
GONG ONG
THE SHIP'S GOING DOWN!
TO THE LIFEBOATS--!
GONG ONG

GONG
ONG
ONG
KONG
YAAUGH!
DR. JORRIS!
IT'S TOO LATE, BERNARD! THAT PART OF THE SHIP IS GONE!
JORRIS!!!
ABANDON SHIP!!!

WE NEED A STRETCHER!
HAS ANYBODY SEEN THE ADMIRAL?
ABANDON SHIP!
STARBOARD ESCAPE ROUTE IS BLOCKED!
GET THE WOUNDED ABOARD FIRST!
WE'VE LOST POWER TO THE ELEVATORS!
MAN THE LIFEBOATS.
SS



..OH...
OOH..



HEY!!
KANEDAAA!!
ARE YOU ALL R GHT?

DID YOU--?!
THEY HAVE DECODED THE SEAL ON SOL.
I GAVE YOU WHAT AID I COULD
AS YOU CAN SEE, MY OWN LEGS ARE...
I BELIEVED WE TWO-- OLD ENEMIES-- WOULD PERISH TOGETHER .. AND THEN, THE ATTACK STOPPED.
.....
OHH--!
KANEDAAA--!

HOW LONG'S IT GONNA TAKE YOU TO FIX THAT THING?
HOW THE HELL SHOULD I KNOW?! NOW, SHUT UP!
KAY'S STUCK IN THERE ALL ALONE! IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO HER IT'LL BE YOUR FAULT!
FINE! IT'S MY FAULT! BUT THAT WON'T GET THIS FLIER OFF THE GROUND.
CRAP!
NOW THE SUN'S GOING DOWN!
YEAH RIGHT. THAT'S MY FAULT, TOO

KAORI!

CAN YOU HEAR ME..?

..WHERE..?
..WHERE ARE YOU?
I CAN HEAR YOUR VOICE, BUT

..MASTER TETSUO..

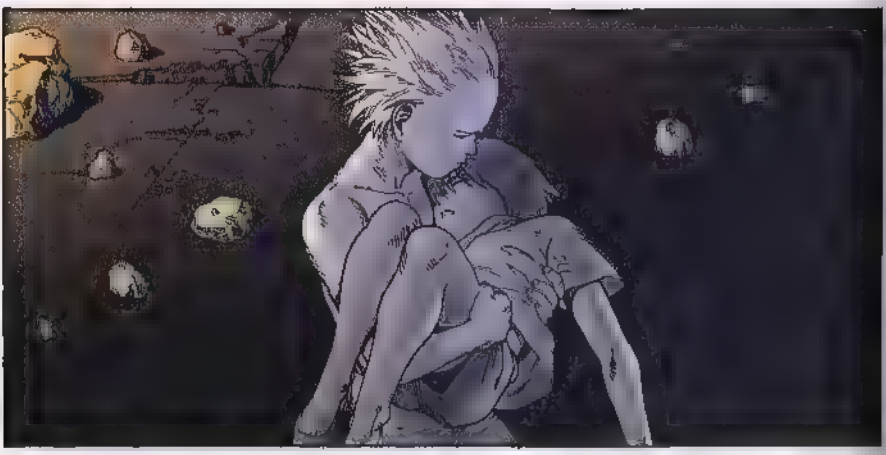
HERE!
I'M HERE BESIDE YOU!
IT'S DARK..
EVERYTHING IS...SO DARK
KAORI--!
!
I COULDN'T DO IT!
I COULDN'T HOLD THE FOCUS ON MY POWER!

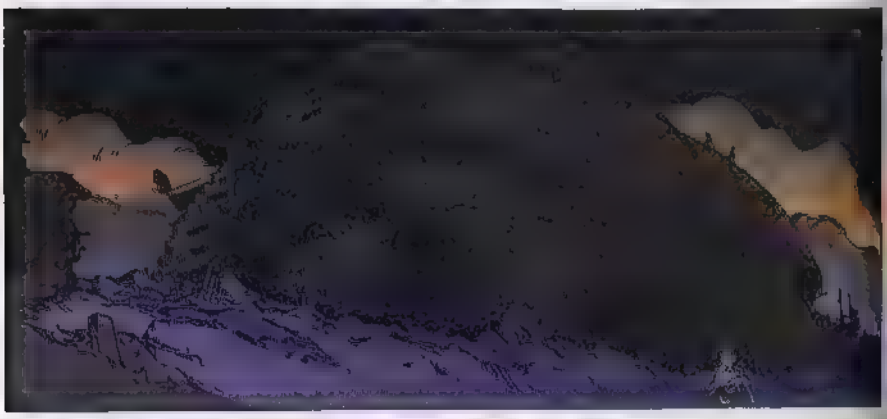
OH, KAORI...
DAMMIT!
I CAN'T FIX THE ENGINE WHEN IT'S TOO DARK TO SEE!
CLOWN
KLANK
TROUBLE IS, YOU PUT TOO MUCH FAITH IN MACHINES.
I'M TIRED OF WAITING!
YOU MEAN...
...YOU'RE GOING IN UN-ARMED?!

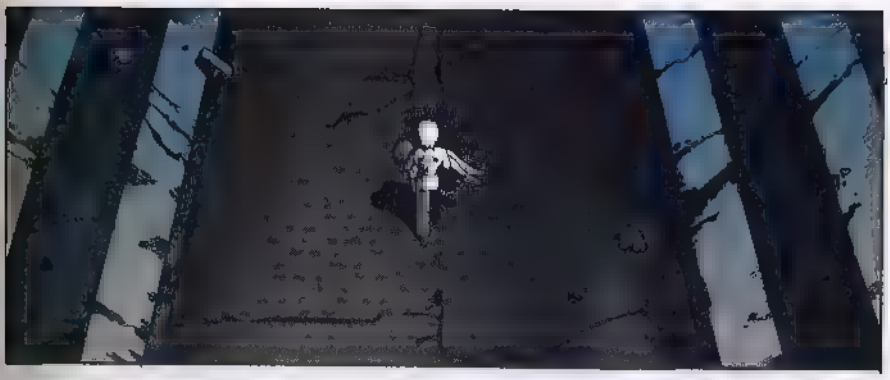
THE MORE THAT BASTARD'S POWER GROWS...
...THE LESS CONTROL HE'S GOT OVER THE SMALL STUFF.
BEST TIME TO STRIKE...
...IS NOW THAT HE CAN'T DO ANYTHING SUBTLE.
TAKE AKIRA BACK TO MIYAKO.
SO YOU CAN BE A BIG SHOT HERO.
I TOLD YOU, JOKER THIS IS PERSONAL BETWEEN TETSUO AND ME.
KANEDA!!
WAIT!
I WON'T STAND FOR IT!
I'M NOT YOUR BABY SITTER!
POK

WHAT'S...?
I GOT SOME SAY IN THIS, Y'KNOW!
?!
HEY!
WHERE D'YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?
VRRN
MAKE ME LOOK LIKE A FOOL!
SEE ME COME IN THERE WITH A KID, I'LL NEVER LIVE IT DOWN!
KLAT

HEY!
HEY! BACK HERE, YOU!
KANEDA, YOU BASTARD!
YOU CAN'T DO THIS T'ME!
BEEEE
GODDAMIT!
SHIT!!
SHRAK
CLOW
WAIT!!!
Shuf



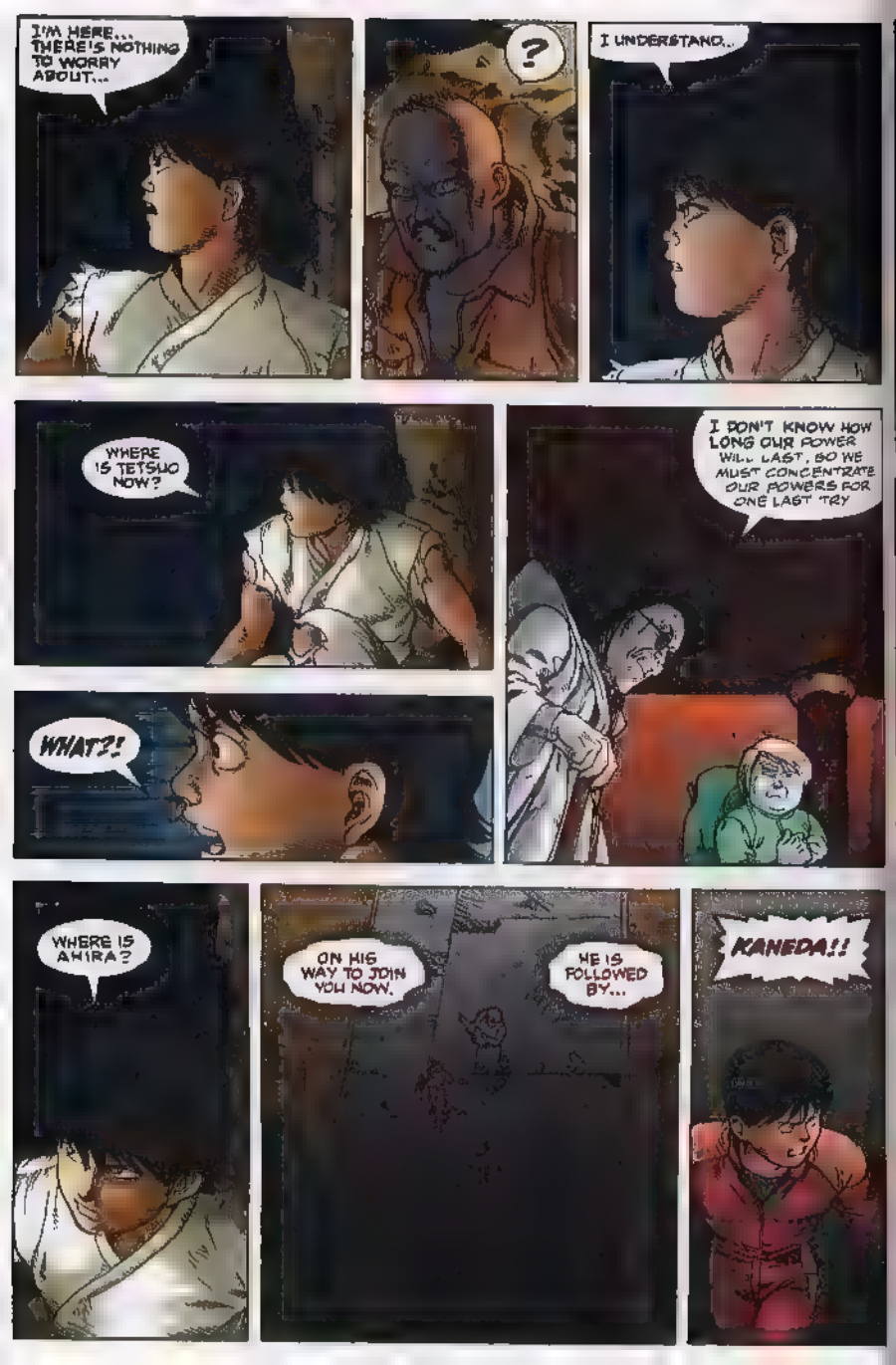




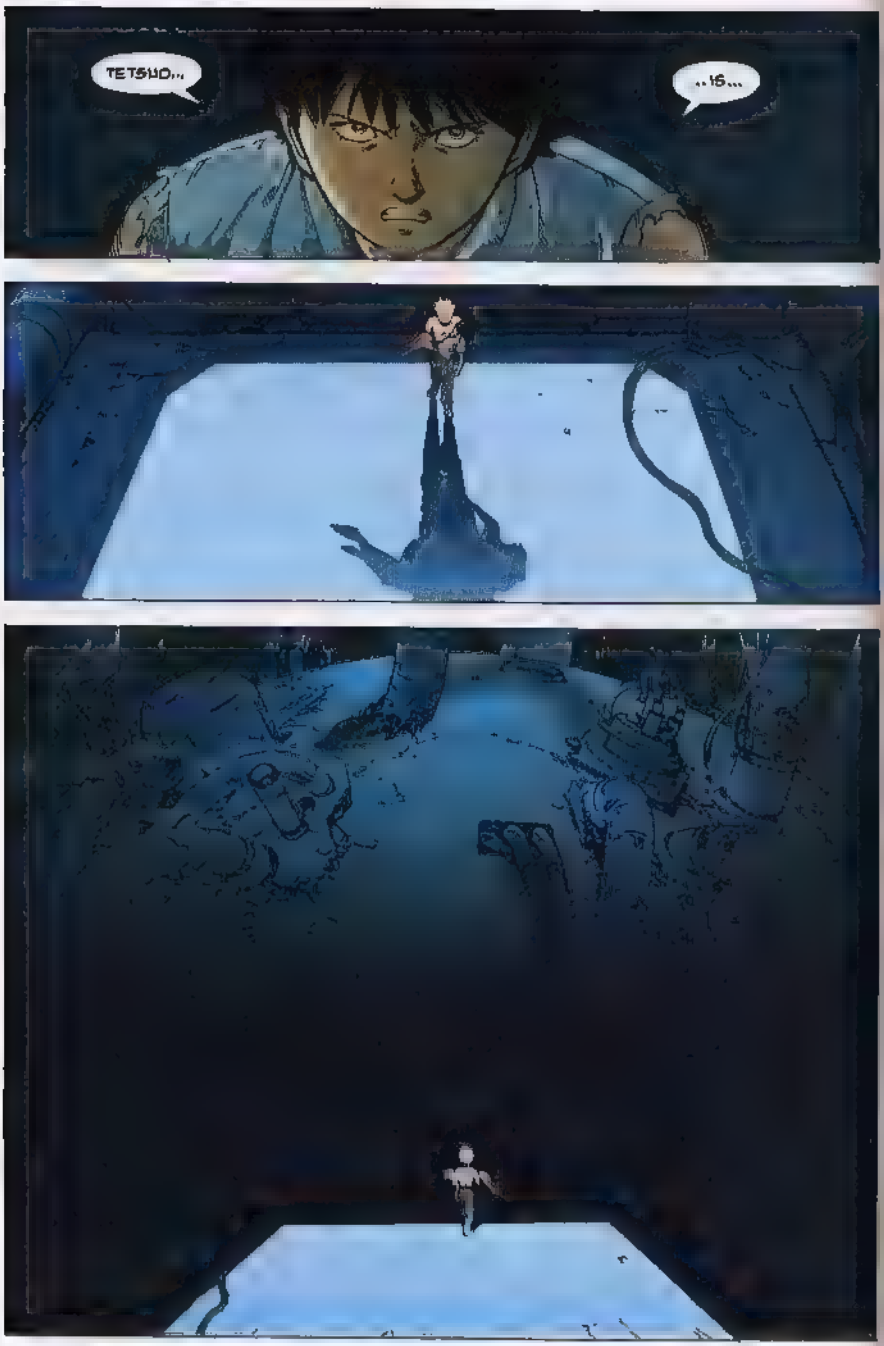
COME QUICKLY!
NEVER MIND THE DEAD! IT'S THE SURVIVORS WHO'LL BENEFIT FROM OUR AID!
HERE SHE COMES
HOW IS KIYOKO?
I NEED... A PILL...
I... SEE
OUR STORES WERE DESTROYED
THESE ARE ALL I HAVE LEFT.

I'VE ORDERED THAT MORE BE SYNTHESIZED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE...
...BUT WE CAN'T EVEN BEGIN UNTIL WE'VE LOCATED THE COMPONENT SUBSTANCES.
I DON'T THINK WE'LL FIND THEM BEFORE THESE ARE GONE
I NEVER FORESAW THAT WE'D MAKE OUR STAND IN SUCH DESPERATE STRAITS--!

KAAY!!
KAY!!!
WHAT HAS BECOME OF YOU?!
WHAT'S WRONG?


I'M HERE... THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT...
?
I UNDERSTAND..
WHERE IS TETSUO NOW?
I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG OUR POWER WILL LAST, SO WE MUST CONCENTRATE OUR POWERS FOR ONE LAST TRY
WHAT?!
WHERE IS AKIRA?
ON HIS WAY TO JOIN YOU NOW.
HE IS FOLLOWED BY...
KANEDA!!

.....
WHOEVER IS THERE, WHEN THE TIME COMES, YOU MUST STRIKE!
I KNOW THAT!
SO... YOU HAVE THE GIFT AS WELL...
ARE THEY... ARE KIYOKO AND MASARU ALL RIGHT?
THEY'RE FINE
WHAT ABOUT AKIRA?
AND... TETSUO...?
SO FAR, HIS POWERS ARE STABLE.


TETSUO...
...IS...

AT LEAST TELL ME WHO'S CALLING YOU!
HOW RE THEY CALLING? CAN YOU HEAR RADIO WAVES?
CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS?
AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, THIS KID'S SO UN-SOCIABLE!
Y'KNOW... MAYBE THEY'RE ALL LINKED BY STRING AND PAPER CUPS...
WHATTAYA MEAN?
THESE KIDS HAVE A NETWORK..
LIKE SOME KIND OF MUTANT CB...
THAT'S A LOW CLASS, RETRO WAY OF PUTTING IT.
"THE WAY THEY'RE ALL TUNED IN TO EACH OTHER.
EACH ONE ALWAYS SEEMS TO KNOW WHAT THE OTHERS ARE DOING.

HEY, RADIO'S MORE SCIENTIFIC THAN A TOY TELEPHONE
THERE'RE SOME DISCOVERIES SCIENCE ISN'T UP ON
HUNH?
SOMEONE'S COMING!
CLICK CLICK
Tak
30
HOLD IT!
HMM?

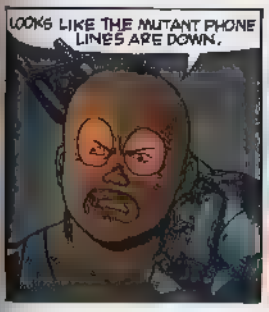
CHIYOKO!
KANEDA...!?
ARE YOU FEELING BETTER?
COMPLETELY.
I CAME TO LOOK AFTER YOU.
ME..?
YOU TAKE TOO MANY CHANCES. KAY WAS WORRIED.
THAT'S STUPID! KAY'S THE ONE WHO NEEDS HELP! WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO SAVE HER!

YOU NEVER CHANGE...EXCEPT THAT NOW AKIRA IS WITH YOU.
WAIT UP!
I'M TALKIN' T'YOU!
STUPID KID...
WHERE IS HE GOING?
I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE THINKS HE'S GOING, BUT HE'S HEADED FOR OUR DESTINATION

SURE IS PEACEFUL.

HEY, KANEDA...
WHAT?

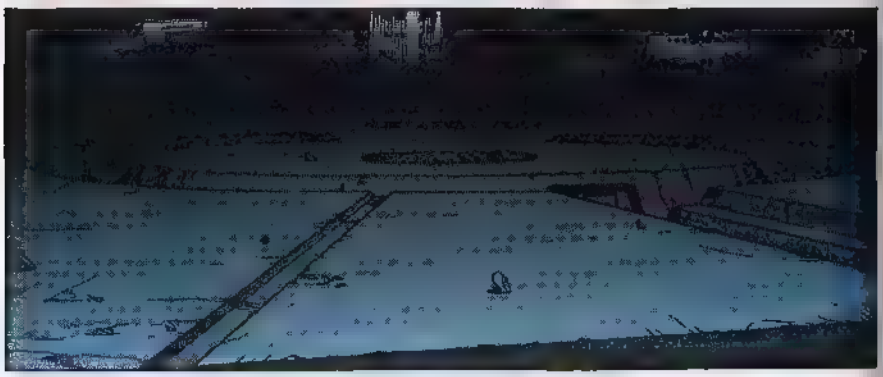
WHERE D'YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?

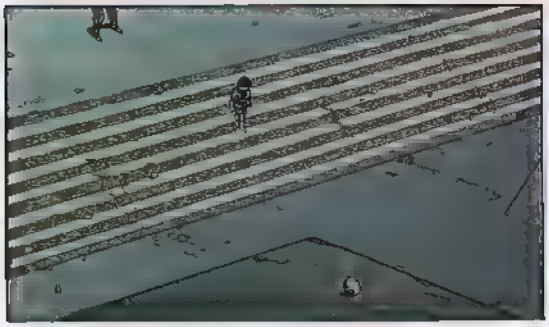

LOOKS LIKE THE MUTANT PHONE LINES ARE DOWN.

HUH?

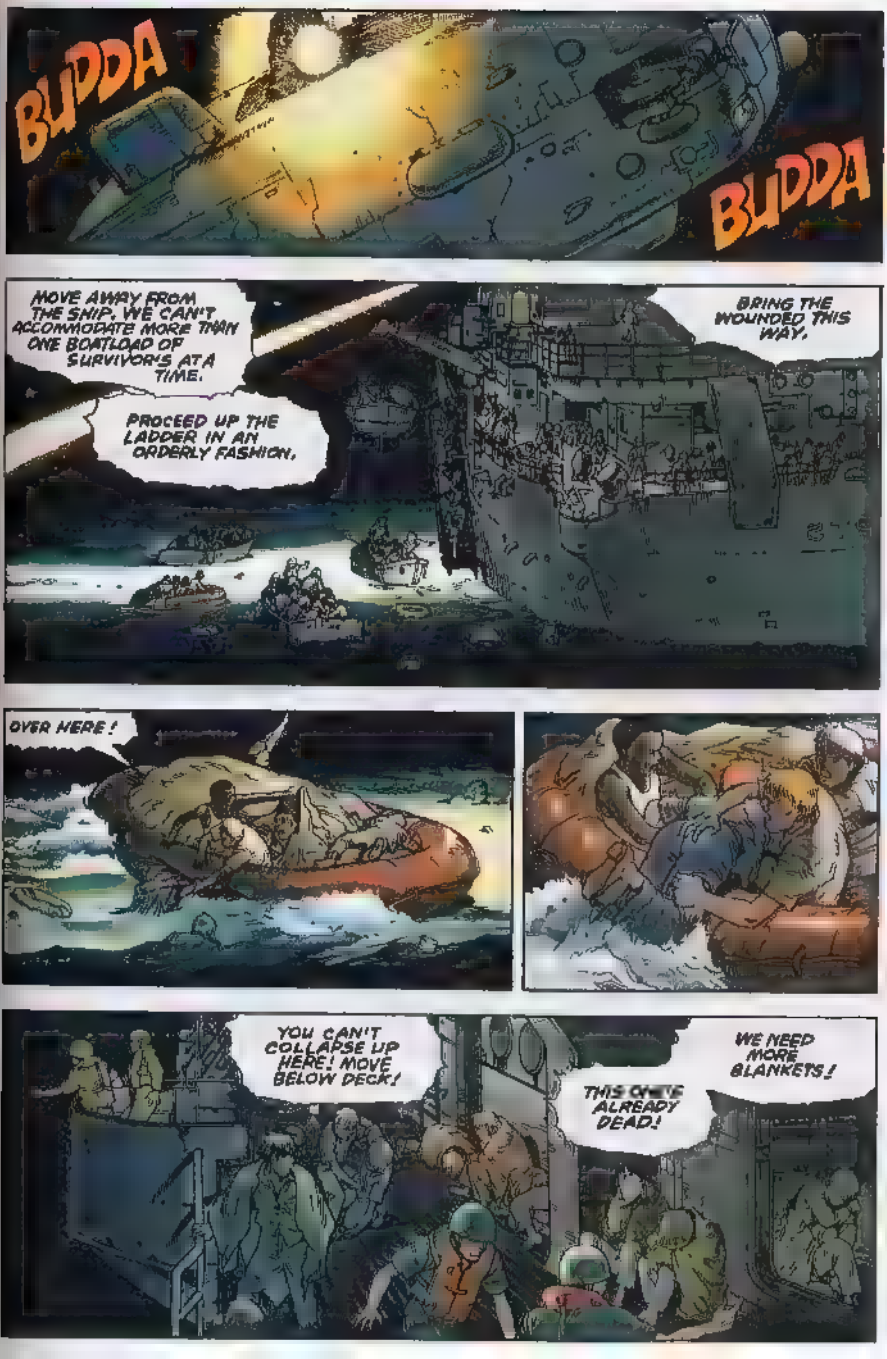
WE WANT THE STADIUM... BACK THAT WAY.

THERE'S NOTHING OVER THERE.





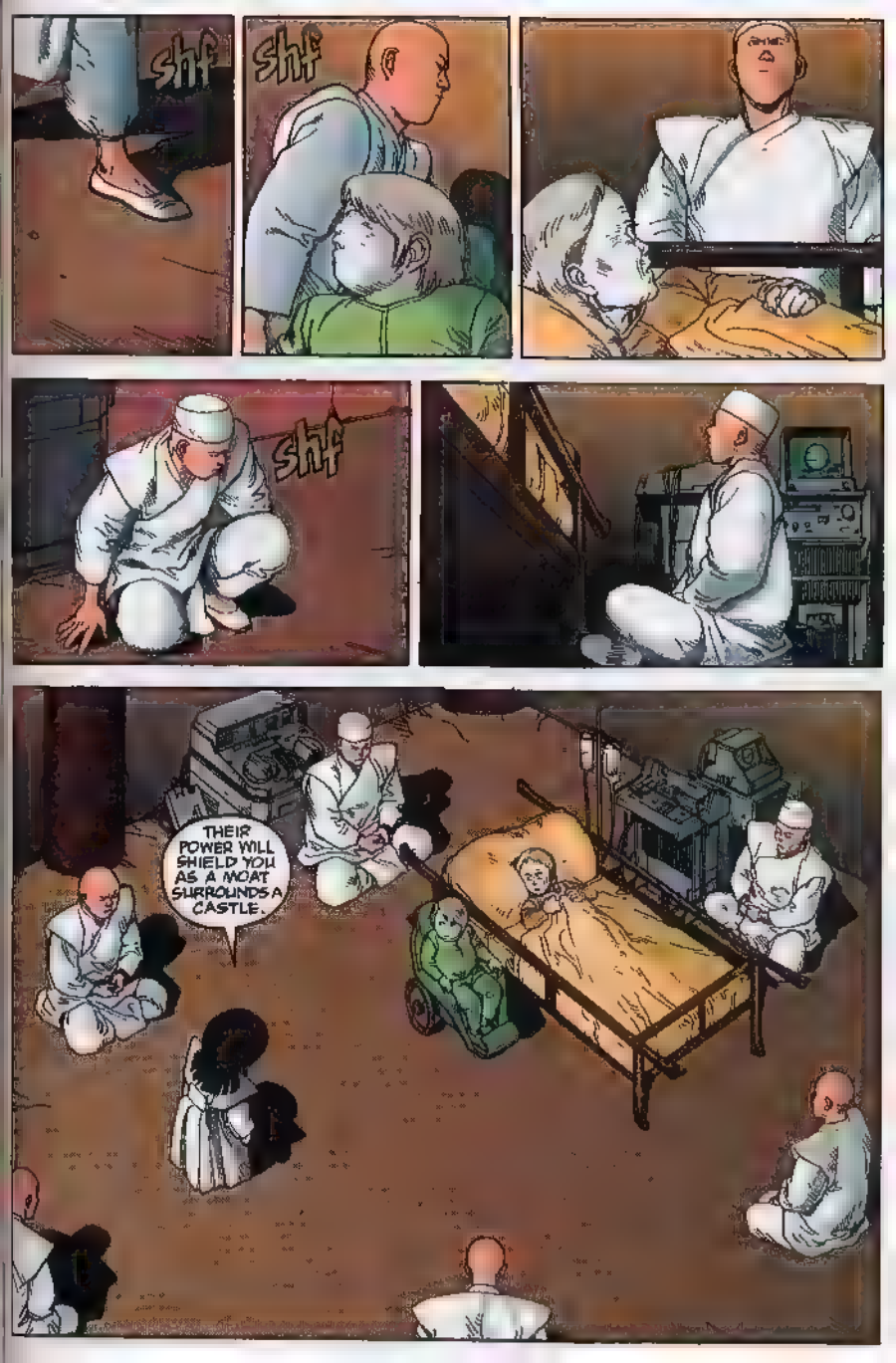
WHAT'S IN THAT BUILDING?
IT'S...

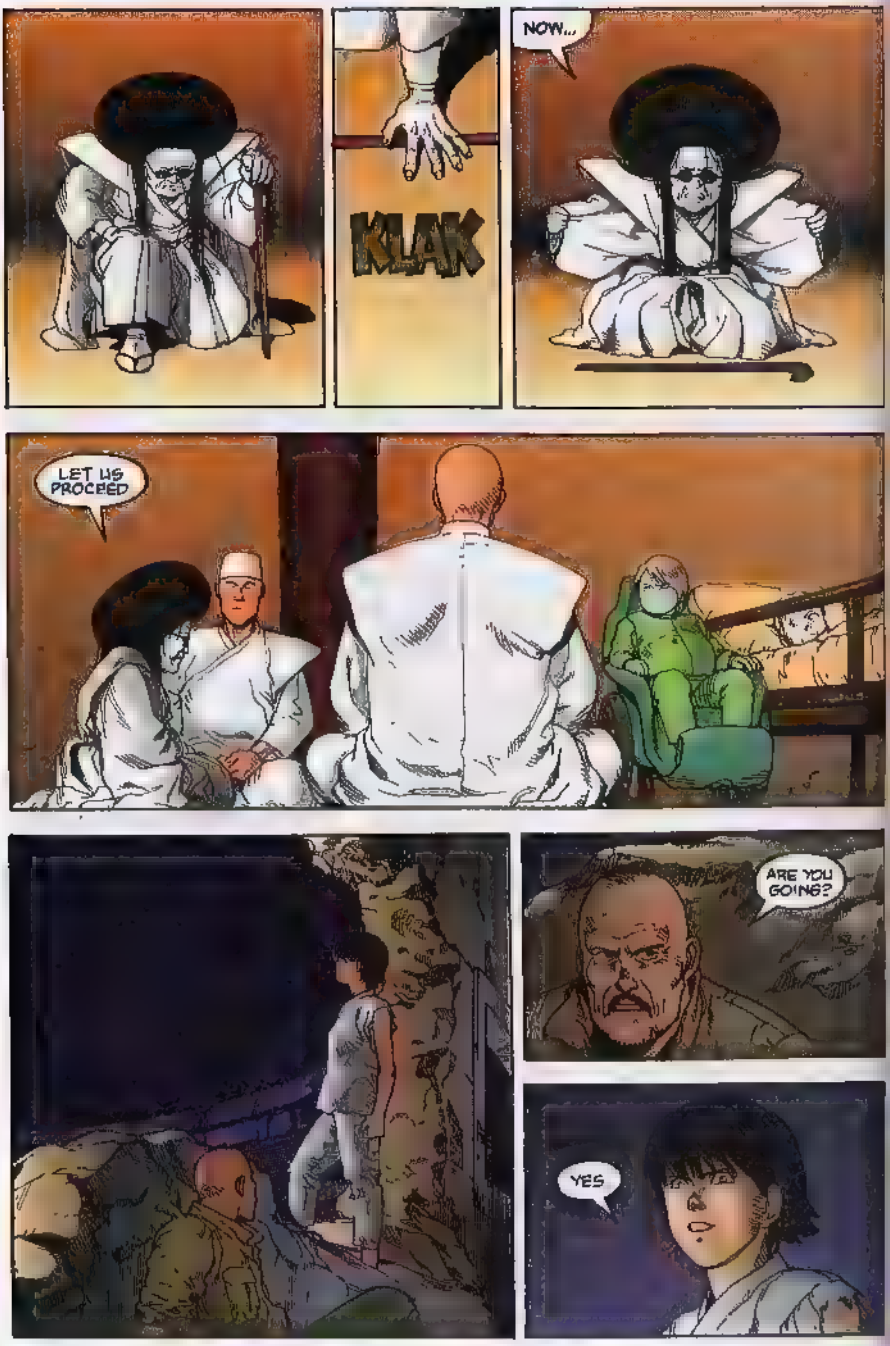

BUDDA
BUDDA
MOVE AWAY FROM THE SHIP. WE CAN'T ACCOMMODATE MORE THAN ONE BOATLOAD OF SURVIVOR'S AT A TIME.
PROCEED UP THE LADDER IN AN ORDERLY FASHION.
BRING THE WOUNDED THIS WAY.
OVER HERE!
YOU CAN'T COLLAPSE UP HERE! MOVE BELOW DECK!
THIS ONE'S ALREADY DEAD!
WE NEED MORE BLANKETS!

YOU CAN'T STOP HERE. WE HAVE A LOT MORE PEOPLE TO BRING ABOARD.
MORE BLANKETS!
ALL OF THE WOUNDED MUST IDENTIFY THEMSELVES!

IS EVERYONE HERE...?
I HAD THOUGHT THAT MORE OF YOU WOULD HAVE SURVIVED.
THERE ARE THREE OTHERS, LADY, BUT THEY'RE TOO BADLY INJURED TO STAND
I SEE.
THESE MEN ARE...
THEIR POWER IS AS NOTHING COMPARED TO YOURS. STILL... THEY WIELD IT WITH CONSUMMATE SKILL.
...SPECIAL AMONG MY FOLLOWERS. THEY HAVE THE GIFT AND I'VE TRAINED THEM IN ITS USE.

THEY WILL SERVE AS YOUR BODYGUARDS.
DON'T SAY A WORD.
DON'T PROTEST.
DON'T BELITTLE THEIR WILLINGNESS TO SACRIFICE THEMSELVES FOR YOU.
THEY ARE PREPARED TO DIE. THEY THINK OF THEMSELVES AS DEAD ALREADY.
INDEED.
THEY OFFERED UP PRAYERS FOR THEIR OWN SOULS AT A FUNERAL SERVICE I CONDUCTED.


Shf
Shf
Shf
THEIR POWER WILL SHIELD YOU AS A MOAT SURROUNDS A CASTLE.

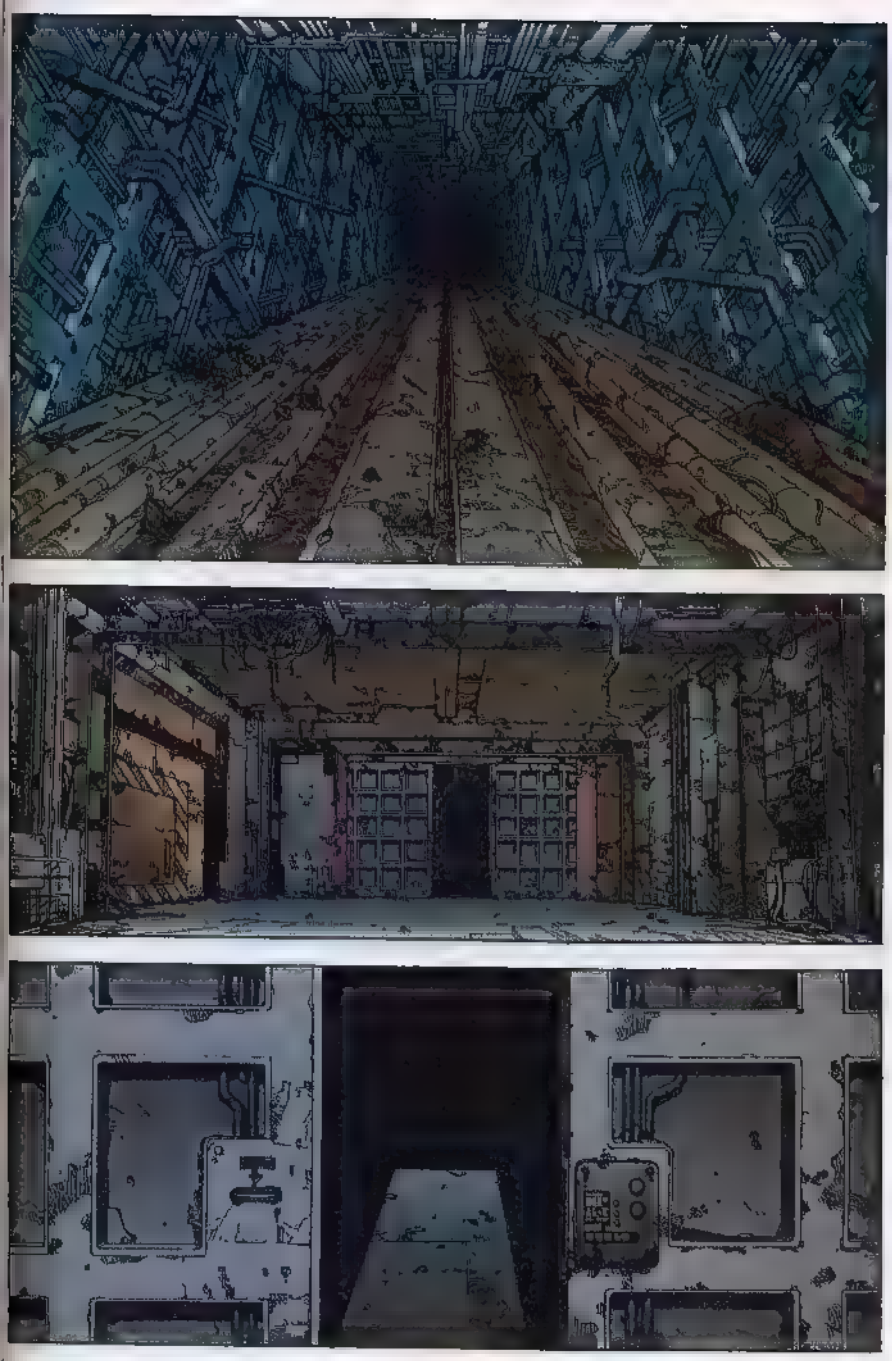

NOW...
KLAK
LET US PROCEED
ARE YOU GOING?
YES

I THOUGHT THIS PLACE WAS A SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT.

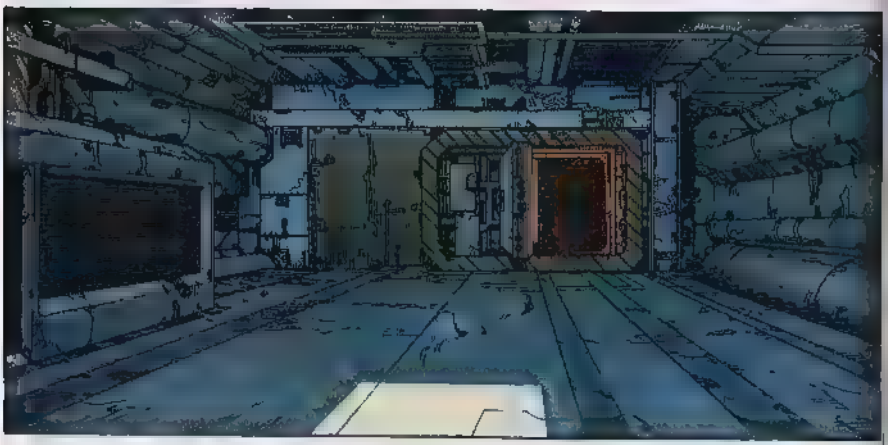
WHAT'S GOING ON?
I ALWAYS CAME IN FROM THE SEWERS.
I NEVER GUESSED THIS WAS THE MAIN ENTRANCE
IS THIS THE BASE WHERE THEY HAD THE CRYOGENIC STORAGE CAPSULE HIDDEN?
EXACTLY!
SO WHY'D HE BRING US HERE?
BECAUSE HE WANTS WHAT'S BELOW US.
WHO'S THERE?!
SHOW YOURSELF!

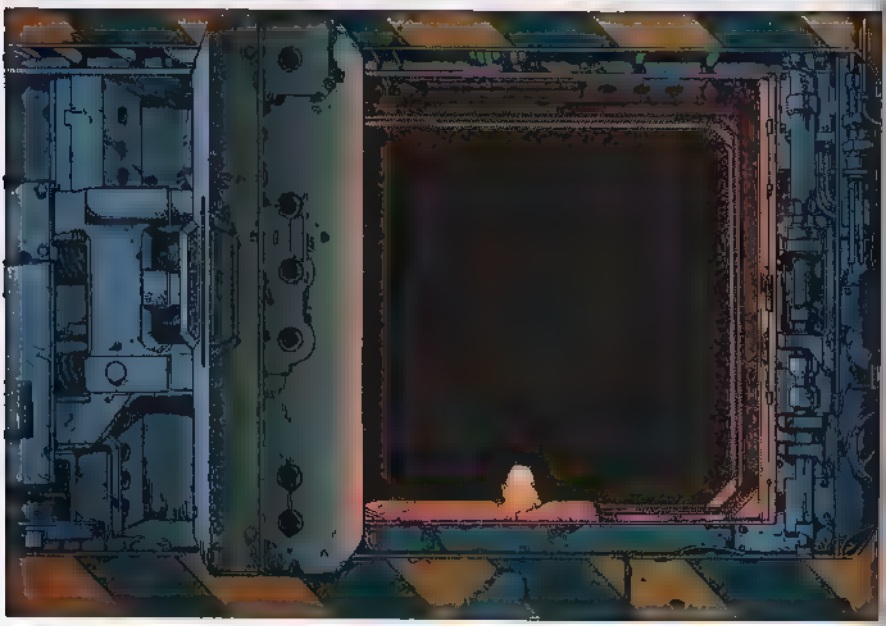
RYU!
YOU'RE STILL ALIVE?
?
DAMN!
EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT'S GOIN' ON BUT ME.
YOU ALL LOOK WELL
WHERE DID YOU DISAPPEAR TO?
ENOUGH SMALL TALK WHAT'S DOWNSTAIRS THAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT?
MASTER TETSUO!
SO THAT'S IT!

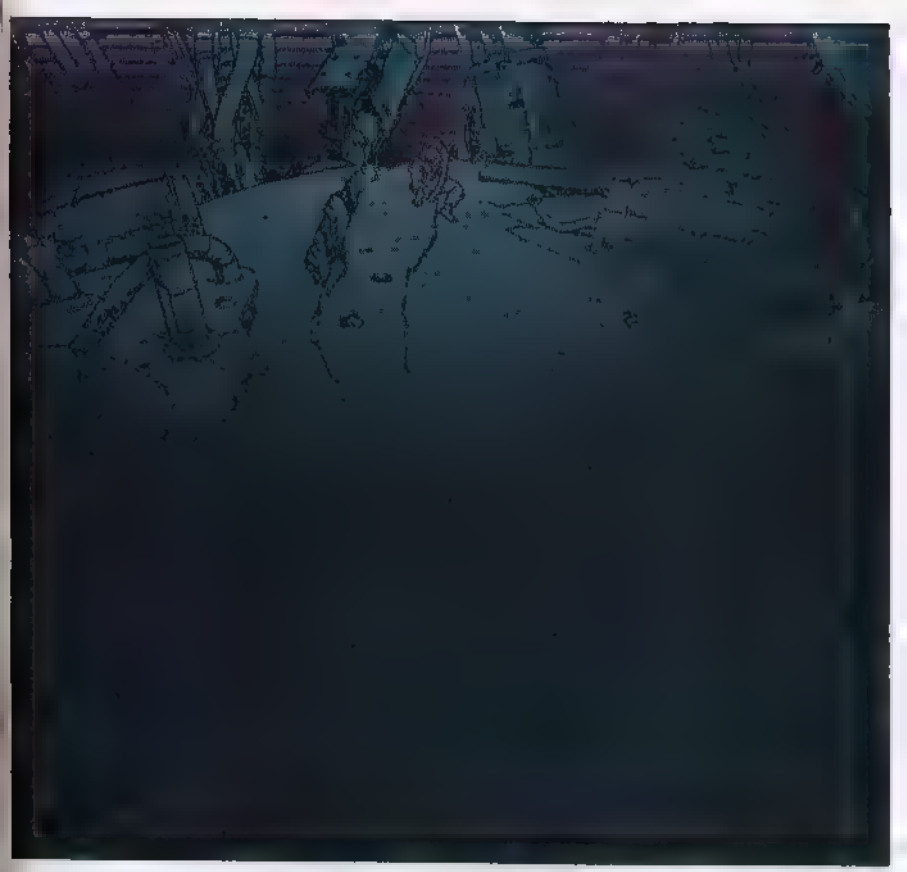
RIGHT. EXACTLY WHO WE'RE AFTER
HE WAS CARRYING SOMEONE. A GIRL..
KAY?!
KAY AND I AREN'T EXACTLY STRANGERS. I'D HAVE NOTICED.
NO. TH S LOOKED LIKE THE DAUGHTER OF SOME REFUGEE. SHE MUST HAVE BEEN TETSUO'S GIRLFRIEND..
TAKING AKIRA DOWN THERE MAY BE LIKE JUMPING INTO A FIRE HOLDING A LIVE BOMB.
SOMETIMES THE BEST WAY OF FIGHTING FIRE IS WITH A LITTLE HIGH EXPLOSIVE

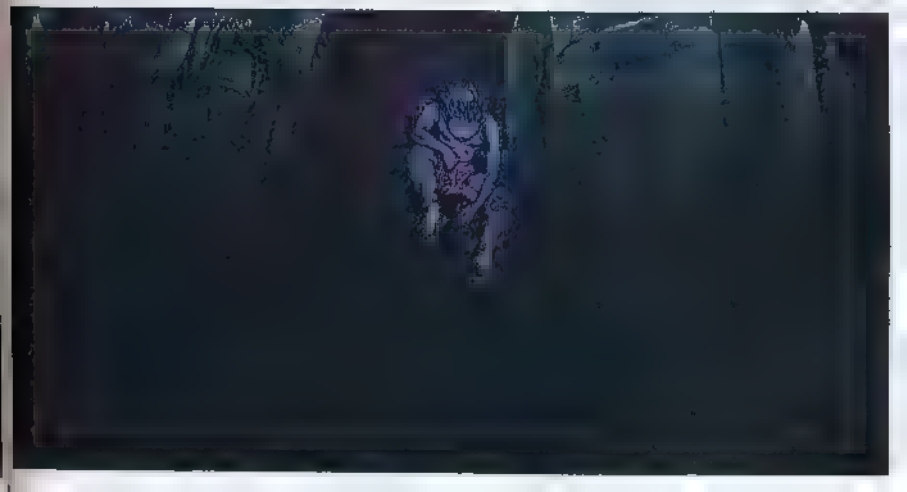


SHUK









YOU AGAIN
WHERE'S KANEDA?
OH HIS WAY. HE'S BRINGING AKIRA.
AAH
?!
.....

IT'S BEGUN AGAIN, HASN'T IT?
HEH...
HAHAHAHA
DO YOU REALIZE...
..WHAT'S INSIDE ME?

THIS PLACE IS HUGE!
AT THIS RATE WE WON'T GET DOWN THERE TILL TOMORROW!
AN' THEN YOU GOTTA WORRY ABOUT WHETHER YOUR SKINNY LEGS'LL BE STRONG ENOUGH TO CARRY YOU BACK OUT
UP YOURS!
HUNH?!
LOOK!
WHAT'S THAT?
THE ELEVATOR!
LIKE MANNA FROM HEAVEN! LIKE WATER IN THE DESERT! AN ELEVATOR, WHEN WE'RE IN A HURRY TO GET DOWN!

HOW DO YOU KNOW IT WORKS?
HEY, JOKER?
GIVE IT A PUSH.
IN YOUR DREAMS!
WHAT?

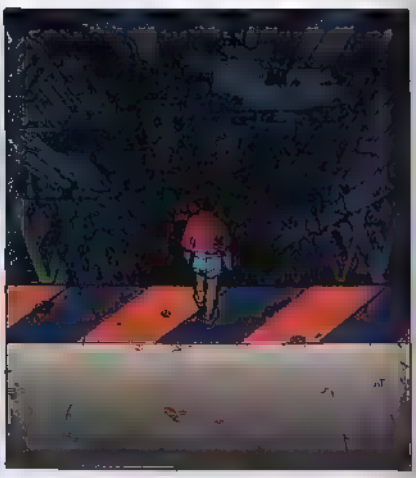
HAHAHAHAHAHA
HAHAHAHAHA...
YOU CRACK ME UP!
...TELLING ME IT'S UP TO ME...
...CONTROL MYSELF... CONTROL AKIRA...
THAT BITCH SCAMMED ME! AN' I FELL FOR IT!
AND NOW YOU'VE COME TO REAP WHAT SHE SOWED!

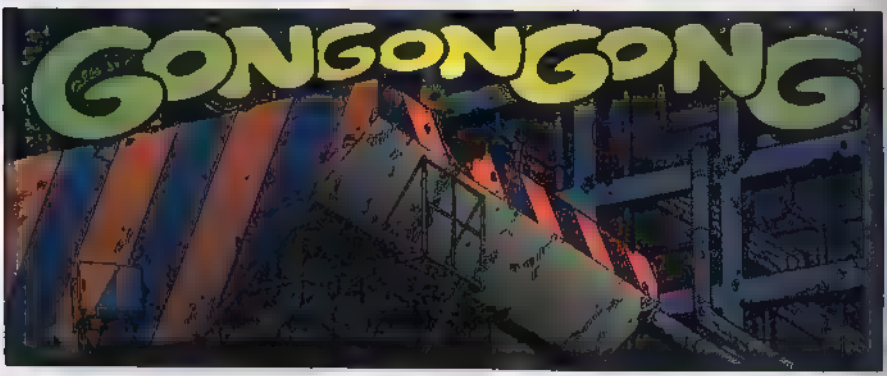
...MIYAKO... SCREW HER.
AHHH!
AEEI

KA..KANEDAAA..
AUGH!
HELP
..PLEASE
..H-HELP

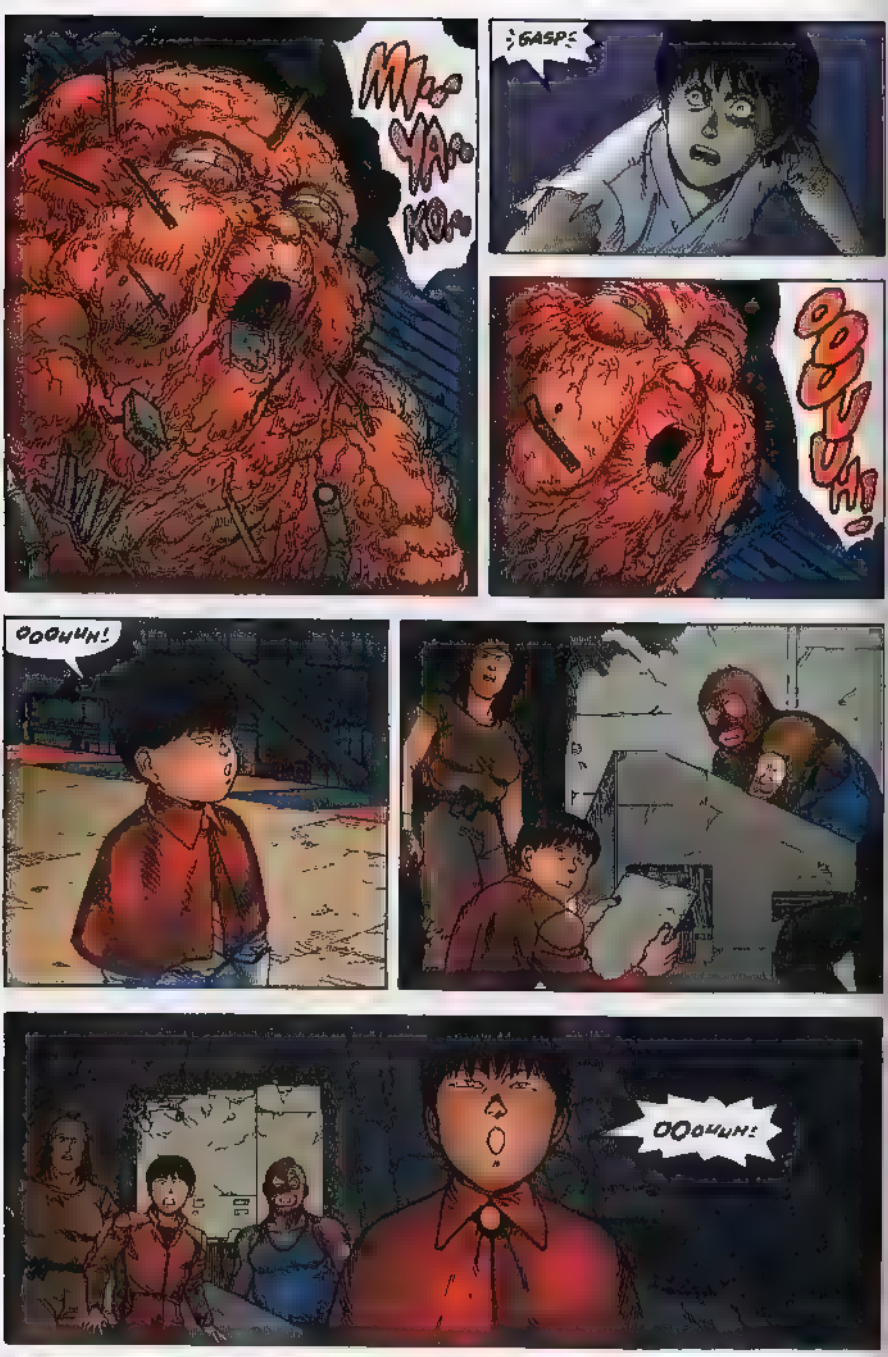
YAAAAAGH!
KABOOM

WHAT THE HELL...?!
ZZAP ZZAP
YIPE!
KLOONG
GOONG
IT'S MOVING!



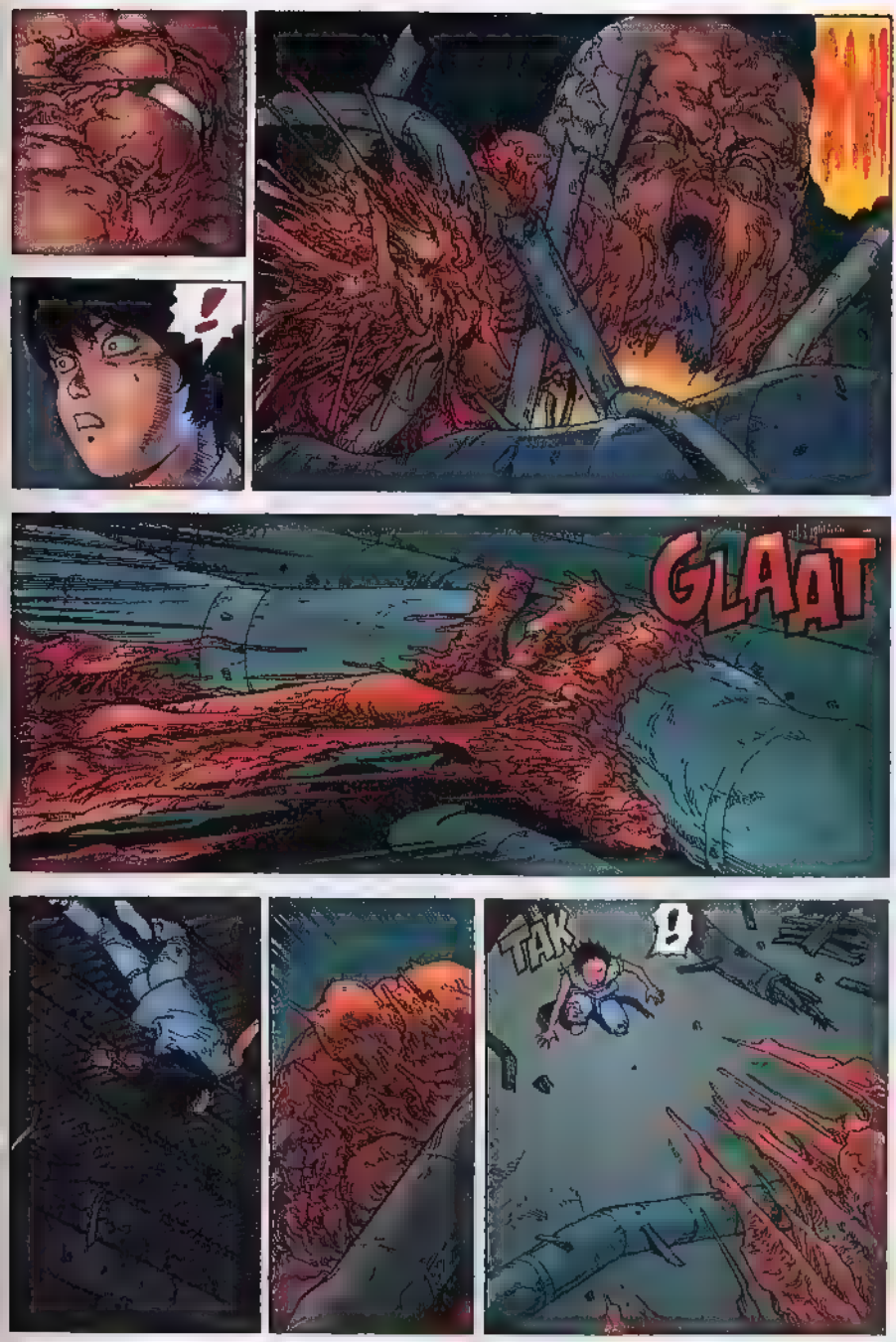

GONGONGONG

KRRMBLE
WHOM
TAK
HIS EGO STRUCTURE HAS UTTERLY COL-LAPSED! YOU MUST DRAW UPON ALL THE POWER AT YOUR COMMAND AND STRIKE NOW!
!


MMM YAH KOH
:GASP:
OOUUH!
OOOHHH!
OOOHHH!

OOOuuuh!
KRRAK
SSSHUM
FWOOOM
KRRUNK

RRNNRRM
MMMYAHKOOOOM
NO, TETSUO.
TO GET TO THE TEMPLE, YOU'LL HAVE TO GO THROUGH ME.
SNAP
KRASH
BOOM


!
GLAAT
TAK
!

SLUKK
ZZZM
GLUGAGLUG
KA...
...DA...

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The wagons have drawn into circles on the rubble strewn plain of Neo-Tokyo, those still surviving forging lines of defense to hold off the furies that rail against them all. Aboard an American warship, fighting men trade ordnance for escape in a desperate attempt to stay alive. Within the weakening ramparts of her temple, Lady Miyako shelters young children holding the secrets of powers older than time. Beneath the city's labyrinthine infrastructure, the berserker named Tetsuo struggles to hold himself together against attacks that tear at his body and soul.

A most terrible siege has set in across this metropolis-turned-battlefield. . .and the walls have started to crumble.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S

AKIRA

DIRECT EDITION

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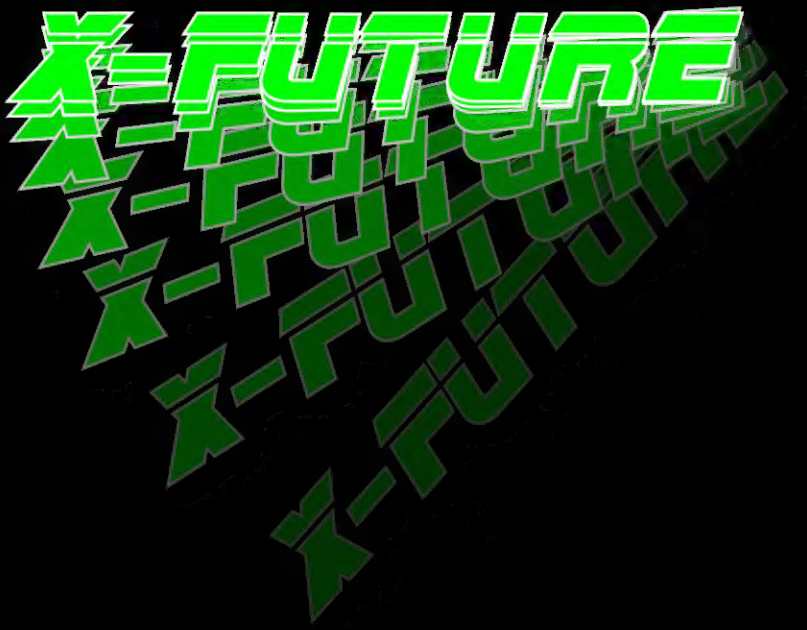

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